

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF SIR NICHOLAS ASSHETON, OF DOWNHAM,  
DATED 1617

June 1st, 1617

Today I paid a visit to John Parker, hoping to persuade him to join the commission in favor of my cousin Robinson against Sir Thomas Metcalf. The situation between them has escalated to a level of lawlessness that resembles a civil war. It is imperative that we bring about a resolution and restore peace to Raydale House in Wensleydale.

June 4th

This evening, an ominous event unfolded. Sir Thomas Metcalf arrived at Raydall House with a group of about 40 armed men. They came at sunset, carrying guns, bills, picks, swords, and other weapons. They laid siege to the house where my aunt Robinson resided with her three young children. Frightened, she quickly closed the door and sought an explanation from Sir Thomas. She inquired about the reason for this use of force, asking whether it was for the possession of the house and land and, if so, by what authority. She also proposed that if Sir Thomas' claim was stronger than her husband's, who was currently in London, she and her family would quietly vacate the premises.

To her dismay, Sir Thomas Metcalf replied insolently, refusing to provide her with any satisfactory answers. He proclaimed that his will was the only authority he needed at that moment. Moreover, his men prevented my aunt from entering the house to retrieve her essential belongings, such as stockings, headdress, and shoes. She was left with no choice but to embark on a long journey, walking for miles with her young children to a nearby town called Buske.

From there, they continued on foot to Morton, enduring great hardship along the way.

Throughout the night, the house was bombarded with gunfire and repeatedly breached, yet somehow it remained under my aunt's control.

June 5th

Desperate for help, my aunt sought assistance from Mr. Midloms and Sir Arthur Daykin, two justices of the peace. Sadly, they were unable to offer her any remedy for the situation. Left with no alternative, she embarked on a double-horse ride to York to plead her case before the Council.

Within Raydall House, my aunt left behind her three sons—John, William, and Robert Robinson—and seven loyal servants and retainers. Among them was a boy named Tom Yorke, who had recently arrived from Knaresborough. Alongside the serving maids, these brave individuals valiantly defended the property, maintaining their hold against the lawless, rude, and unruly company that threatened them. The attackers seemed devoid of morals or restraint, their actions driven by desperation and a lack of respect for the law.

It is my fervent hope that my aunt's journey to York will yield the assistance she so desperately needs. The situation at Raydall House is perilous, and the lives of those within hang in the balance. I shall continue to document the events as they unfold, praying for a swift and just resolution to this troubling conflict.

By Donald Jay